

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

THE SPECIFICATION

The specification has been amended to correct some minor informalities of which the undersigned has become aware, including all of the informalities pointed out by the Examiner.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the specification be approved and entered, and that the objection to the specification be withdrawn.

In addition, it is respectfully requested that the objection to the drawings also be withdrawn since the specification, as amended, now refers to reference character 305.

THE CLAIMS

Independent claims 1, 17 and 18 have been amended to more clearly recite the distinguishing features of the present invention whereby: plural subject images are discriminated in the input image data; the input image data is divided into plural subject image data corresponding to the discriminated plural subject images: a relationship is obtained among the plural subject images; a processing method is determined for the input image data of the plural subject images based on the obtained

relationship; and the input image data of the plural subject images is processed in accordance with the determined processing method so as to produce output image data.

In addition, claim 6 has been amended to depend from claim 3 so as to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 112, and claim 18 has been amended to more clearly recite statutory subject matter so as to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 101.

Still further, the claims have been amended to make various minor grammatical improvements and to correct some minor antecedent basis problems so as to put the claims in better form for issuance in a U.S. patent. In particular, it is noted that claims 13-15 have been amended to correct the informalities pointed out by the Examiner so as to overcome the Examiner's objections to these claims.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered and that the objections to the claims and the rejections under 35 USC 112 and 35 USC 101 be withdrawn.

THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 1-18 were all rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of various combinations of USP 5,038,223 ("Yamada"), USP 6,700,680 ("Toyoda et al"), US 2005/0012856 ("Aoyama et al"), US 2002/0024541 ("Imaizumi et al"), and US 2001/0052996 ("Nozaki"). These rejections, however, are

respectfully traversed with respect to the claims as amended hereinabove.

According to the present invention as recited in amended independent claims 1, 17 and 18, an image processing method, apparatus and computer program are provided wherein: input image information including input image data is obtained from an input device; plural subject images are discriminated in the input image data; the input image data is divided into plural subject image data corresponding to the discriminated plural subject images; a relationship is obtained among the plural subject images; a processing method is determined for the input image data of the plural subject images based on the obtained relationship; and the input image data of the plural subject images is processed in accordance with the determined processing method so as to produce output image data.

For example, as illustrated in Fig. 10 of the present application, plural subject images such as people wearing a uniform, a building and faces are discriminated from input image data. As described in the specification at page 23 lines 4-17, the subject images (or patterns) are recognizable separate and specific subjects existing in an image such as a person or a building. Significantly, according to the claimed present invention, a relationship among the plural subject images is obtained and a processing method for the input image data of the plural subject images is determined based on the obtained

relationship. For example, in accordance with the relationship among the plural subject images, the processing method may make a subject image having a higher priority order to be clearer or brighter than the other subject images.

With respect to the cited references, it is noted that the Examiner has interpreted the edge detector of Yamada as discriminating plural subjects existing in input image data. It is respectfully pointed out, however, that as disclosed at column 15 lines 30-41 of Yamada, this reference is merely directed to method of appointing an area which is at least a portion of original image data, and it is respectfully submitted that Yamada teaches nothing at all about discriminating plural subject images existing in input image data as according to the claimed present invention. In addition, it is respectfully submitted that Yamada does not at all disclose, teach or suggest obtaining a relationship among plural subject images as according to the claimed present invention.

In addition, it is respectfully pointed out that Toyoda et al merely relates to an image forming apparatus which performs gradation conversion processing on image data (see Fig. 12 of Toyoda et al). And it is respectfully submitted that this reference also fails to disclose, teach or suggest discriminating plural subject images existing in input image data and obtaining a relationship among the plural subject images as according to the claimed present invention.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as recited in amended independent claims 1, 17 and 18, and claims 2-16 depending from claim 1, clearly patentably distinguishes over Yamada and Toyoda et al, taken singly or in combination with each other and/or any of the other prior art references of record, under 35 USC 103.

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Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

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